

Message Text

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FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO LONDON FROM HAMILTON
SEPT 15:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L HAMILTON 334

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PDEV, BD, UK

SUBJECT: BERMUDA INDEPENDENCE; A GIANT STEP FORWARD?

SUMMARY: IN A MOVE THAT APPARENTLY CAUGHT UK FOREIGN
COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (FCO) AND THE ACTING GOVERNOR WITH
THEIR POLITICAL PANTS DOWN, PREMIER SHARPE AND CABINET
ON SEPTEMBER 10 DISCLOSED TENTATIVE PLANS FOR DEFINITE
MOVES TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE WITHIN NEXT 6 WEEKS. CABINET
HAS REPORTEDLY INDICATED DESIRE TO HAVE GOVERNOR INCLUDE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PUBLIC REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE IN
OCTOBER 29 SPEECH FROM THE THRONE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE REQUEST OF PREMIER JACK SHARPE, FCO DEPUTY
UNDERSECRETARY FOR DEPENDENT TERRITORIES, E.N. LARMOUR
SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN BERMUDA LAST WEEK FOR WHAT WAS
EXPECTED TO BE A QUOTE TOUR D'HORIZON UNQUOTE ON CURRENT
AND FUTURE GOB/UK RELATIONS. QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY SHARPE
AND MAJORITY OF CABINET WHO MET WITH LARMOUR PRESENTED A
SCENARIO WHICH CONTEMPLATED INDEPENDENCE FOR BERMUDA
WITHIN 2 TO 3 YEARS.

2. SHARPE AND CABINET HAVE REPORTEDLY TOLD LARMOUR THAT
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THEY WANT TO INCLUDE AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF GENERAL REFERENDUM
ON INDEPENDENCE IN THE GOVERNOR'S OCTOBER 29 SPEECH FROM

THE THRONE. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH CONGEN, LARMOUR AND ACTING GOVERNOR G.P. LLOYD, STRESSED APPARENT EARNESTNESS OF CURRENT GOB INDEPENDENCE SENTIMENT. LLOYD AND FCO WERE OBVIOUSLY SURPRISED BY CABINET DECISION. LLOYD NOW EXPECTS CONSULTATIVE REFERENDUM WILL BE HELD WITHIN NEXT 10 TO 12 MONTHS. WITH AFFIRMATIVE VOTE ANTICIPATED, LLOYD ENVISIONS SUBSEQUENT 12 TO 24 MONTH PERIOD OF GESTATION THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE AND OTHER REQUISITE FORMALITIES.

3. AS LARMOUR WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY PRECIPITIOUS CABINET DECISION, HE WAS UNPREPARED TO ANSWER VERY POINTED QUESTIONS PUT FORTH BY THE CABINET, I.E., WILL UK ENTER INTO BI-LATERAL TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP TO PROTECT COMMERCIAL INTERESTS; WILL UK CONTINUE TO PROVIDE CONSULAR SERVICES TO BERMUDIANS ABROAD; WILL INDEPENDENCE REQUIRE MEMBERSHIP IN AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A MISSION AT UN (NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE CABINET WAS MOST INTERESTED IN QUANTIFYING THE EXPENSE INVOLVED IN ATTAINING INDEPENDENCE). IN VIEW OF APPARENT EARNESTNESS OF THE DECISION AND DESIRE OF EARLY TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT FOR REFERENDUM, LARMOUR HAS ARRANGED FOR SHARPE TO MEET WITH MINISTER FOR COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS TED ROLANDS LATER THIS MONTH IN LONDON. LLOYD WILL KEEP CONGEN INFORMED HERE OF DEVELOPMENTS AND LARMOUR OR ROLANDS WILL BRIEF EMBASSY LONDON UPON LARMOUR'S RETURN TO UK O/A SEPTEMBER 21.

4. DETAILS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH LARMOUR, LLOYD AND GOB OFFICIALS AND ANY APPROPRIATE FURTHER ANALYSIS WILL BE TRANSMITTED BY AIRGRAM.

COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOME MINOR IRRITANTS IN GOB/UK BILATERAL RELATIONS HAD SURFACED IN RECENT MONTHS (SHIPPING REGISTRY, AIR ROUTES, LAW OF THE SEA) UBP DECISION TO LAUNCH BERMUDA ON ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE IS CLEARLY MOTIVATED BY INTERNAL POLITICS. WITH DISAPPOINTING RESULTS OF MAY ELECTIONS AND ANTICIPATED LOSS OF YET ANOTHER SEAT IN SANDY'S NORTH BY-ELECTION LATER THIS MONTH, UBP IS CLEARLY PLANNING TO PRE-EMPT OPPOSITION PLP ON ISSUE OF INDEPENDENCE. MEMBERS ENVISION THAT IF PROPOSED SCENARIO IS REALIZED, UBP WILL BECOME FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN THE PUBLIC MIND AS
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THE PARTY THAT BROUGHT INDEPENDENCE TO BERMUDA AND HOPEFULLY TURN THE POLITICAL TIDE BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IN 1980-81.

ALTHOUGH GOB NOW SEEMS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO LAUNCHING INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT SOON, CONGEN WILL AWAIT WITH INTEREST RESULTS OF SHARPE/ROLANDS DISCUSSION LATER THIS MONTH.
RAND UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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